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ABSTRACT

Adults often prefer self-directed learning over teacher-directed, classroom-oriented learning. They feel that their life experiences and self-initiated projects teach them more than they can learn in a formal classroom situation. Persons usually do not pursue such self-directed learning, however, because of conflicting role requirements, a lack of facilities, and a lack of rewards or credentials. The most important obstacle is the lack of credentials for self-directed learning. There are personal, economic, and social constraints on any person's decision and authority to award credentials. A learning contract brokerage model is proposed to help the determined self-directed learner to overcome these constraints to credentialing. The model would set up a brokerage system in which the learner can do needed work for a teacher--who then becomes a "client"--in exchange for an academic credential, or some similar item, such as a letter of recommendation. A third party serves as the "broker" between the learner and client, and helps to overcome the issue of high-status teacher versus low-status learner. The market dynamic is also accounted for in the model as a means of motivating productivity and rewarding creativity. A model contract is proposed for the brokerage. (KC)

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SELF-DIRECTED EXCHANGE OF CREDENTIALS

A Model for Learners, Clients and Brokers

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INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM

Sociologists view education as a socialization process for transmitting knowledge, skills, norms, values and credentials. On college campuses education is seen from divergent perspectives. Educators view it with power to withhold credentials unless evidence of attainment of given knowledge base, skills, norms and values is exhibited. Students frequently question said knowledge base, skills, norms and values and feel that actually they learn more on their own than they do in the classroom. Questioning the given answers is an important part of democratic and scientific value. Yet the educators' power to withhold credentials usually determines what answers appear on final exams. The purpose of this paper is to present a conceptualization of a learning contract brokerage model which determined learners may be able to utilize in equalizing the status differential between the grantor of credentials and the grantee. It also offers an added advantage of applying the market dynamic to the exchange of credentials as a means of motivating productivity and rewarding creativity.

INTRODUCTION

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

First, we need an educational philosophy to legitimize the student's perspective. Educator Malcolm Knowles provides this in his book *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Teachers and Learners* (1975). He advocates andragogy or self-directed learning in preference to pedagogy or teacher-directed learning. He diagrams the divergent assumptions of these two educational perspectives as follows:

A COMPARISON OF ASSUMPTIONS AND PROCESSES OF TEACHER-DIRECTED (PEDAGOGICAL) LEARNING AND SELF-DIRECTED (ANDRAGOGICAL) LEARNING
(Please read as poles on a spectrum, not as black-and-white differences)

ASSUMPTIONS			PROCESS ELEMENTS		
About	Teacher-directed learning	Self-directed learning	Elements	Teacher-directed learning	Self-directed learning
Concept of the learner	Dependent personality	Increasingly self-directed organism	Climate	Formal Authority-oriented Competitive Judgmental	Informal Mutually respectful Consensual Collaborative Supportive
Role of learner's experience	To be built on more than used	A rich resource for learning		Planning	Primarily by teacher
Readiness to learn	Varies with levels of maturation	Develops from life tasks and problems	Diagnosis of needs	Primarily by teacher	By mutual assessment
Orientation to learning	Subject-centered	Task- or problem-centered	Setting goals	Primarily by teacher	By mutual negotiation
Motivation	External rewards and punishments	Internal incentives, curiosity	Designing a learning plan	Content units Course syllabus Logical sequence	Learning projects Learning contracts Sequenced in terms of readiness
<p>The body of theory and practice on which teacher-directed learning is based is often given the label "pedagogy," from the Greek words <i>paid</i> (meaning "child") and <i>agogos</i> (meaning "guide")--thus being defined as the art and science of teaching children.</p> <p>The body of theory and practice on which self-directed learning is based is coming to be labeled "andragogy," from the Greek word <i>aner</i> (meaning "adult")--thus being defined as the art and science of helping adults (or even better, maturing human beings) learn.</p>			Learning activities	Transmittal techniques Assigned readings	Inquiry projects Independent study Experiential techniques
			Evaluation	Primarily by teacher	By mutual assessment of self-collected evidence

Dr. Knowles' book is intended to aid teachers and learners in developing skills for facilitating or pursuing self-directed learning. The following builds upon Dr. Knowles' work by noting that there are a number of "environmental" obstacles to self-directed learning. These are identified as being conflicting role requirements, a lack of facilities and a lack of social rewards or credentials.

INTRODUCTION

CREDENTIALS

The most important obstacle is the lack of credentials for self-directed learning. By and large roles and facilities are not allocated unless there is some social reward, such as credentials, which can be withheld if the roles and facilities are not applied appropriately as judged by the person allocating them. There are personal, economic and social constraints on any person's decision and authority to award credentials. The learning contract brokerage model offers a general set of principles which can be applied to deal with these constraints.

PERSONAL CONSTRAINTS

There may be an incompatibility between the personalities of the self-directed learner and the person with authority to award a credential. By making brokerage contracts completely voluntary for both the learner and the person with authority to award a credential, it is likely that people with incompatible personalities will avoid one another unless there is some outweighing relative advantage.

There is a general personal constraint which must be dealt with however. This might be described as "vested interest in status differential." Traditionally the person with authority to award a credential is of higher status than the person seeking a credential. This authority is generally perceived by the student in terms of prescribed behaviors necessary to perform if the credential is to be achieved. Pursuit of self-directed learning goals suggests the learner decides what behaviors he will perform to obtain the credential. In this regard the learner is a "change agent" and must demonstrate the relative advantage of modifying the status differential to the person with authority to award a credential.

INTRODUCTION

ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

A means of dealing with the persons vested interest in the status differential and economic constraints at the same time is to offer an economic advantage. The general suggestion to self-directed learners in this regard is that they volunteer to perform work roles for the person with authority to award credentials in exchange for the credentials rather than economic rewards. When the economic costs of higher education to the student in terms of tuition, taxes and income foregone are considered this suggestion may be economically advantageous to the self-directed learner as well.

Client

By providing an economic advantage the learner raises himself to a more nearly equal status relationship with the person with authority to grant a credential. Thus in the model presented below the person with the authority to award a credential for self-directed learning is called a client rather than a teacher. The obvious reason for this is that the learner provides a service to the "client" in exchange for a credential. Another reason for the term "client" is that educators' are not the only persons with authority to award credentials. Any person of higher status than the learner is capable of awarding a credential which is valuable at that status level. A letter of recommendation for the learner will suffice. This realization broadens the marketplace of potential "clients" who may award credentials.

INTRODUCTION

ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS (Continued)

Broker

Even a determined learner will have difficulty overcoming the constraints observed on the weight of the strategy of providing a service to the client in exchange for a credential alone. Potential clients would be suspect of a learner offering to do work for a letter of recommendation. To facilitate the exchange between the learner and the client a third party to the learning contracts is suggested. The broker's role is to counsel the learner in negotiating and carrying out learning contracts and to keep a permanent record of contracts negotiated and carried out under his/her administration. The broker is an agent of the learner's in that he/she can help to equalize the status differential between learner and client by negotiating on the learner's behalf. The broker also is an agent of the client's in that he/she assures a permanent record or "transcript" will be kept. Thus, should the learner fail to fulfill the contract the public record of this would make it more difficult for the learner to enter subsequent contracts. The broker also communicates to the learner and the client how their exchange can be written in behavioral terms and arbitrates any disagreements between the two. Since the broker is in a good position to observe the marketplace of potential clients and learners he/she can serve to bring parties with mutual interests together.

INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The most difficult obstacle to the self-directed achievement of credentials for self-directed learning is social constraints on the authority to award credentials. To deal with this constraint the learning contract brokerage calls attention to the elements of culture and social organization which are cognitive and behavioral, not people (Bertrand 1972). Two people in interaction can negotiate the cognitive elements of their culture and the behavioral elements of their social organization in any manner that they themselves desire within the context of the personal, economic and social constraints from outside their culture and social organization which they are committed to or which they accept. Dyads of people can do this completely on their own volition and design. The purpose of designing a learning contract brokerage to facilitate this process is to anticipate disfunctional consequences of it and structure adjustive procedures for dealing with them.

INTRODUCTION

REASONING BEHIND THE MODEL

An important reason why persons inclined toward self-directed learning do not pursue it is because they cannot obtain credentials verifying they have learned. A way of overcoming the personal and economic constraints on a persons decision to award a credential is to provide a service to that person in exchange for a credential. In keeping with this idea the person awarding a credential is designated as the "client" since a service is performed for him/her. A broker is suggested as the person to facilitate the exchange between the learner and the client. But the most difficult constraint is that of social organization on persons' authority to award credentials. For dealing with this social constraint the observation is made that social organization is ideas and behaviors, not people. The following principles illustrate how many opportunities there are for a learner to pursue his own self-directed goals in relation to the client and broker.

BROKERAGE GOAL

Basic Contract

LEARNER OBJECTIVE

Self-Directed Learning

Oriented to some abstract and general goal.

PROBLEM

Conflicting Role Requirements

Demands of professors, employers, associates, peers, friends in need and family on learner's time and efforts. If the learner's role of self-directed learner is not legitimized in relation to these people there will be very little time to apply it.

Lack of facilities

Learning, human and material resources. To organize various resources as facilities in relation to the self-directed learning goal the learner needs to offset the costs.

Lack of Social Rewards

Requirements established to legitimize learning objectives, establish usefulness or value, and certify evidence of achievement. There are inherent rewards for self-directed learning, but if social rewards, i.e. credentials are not provided for self-directed learning it conflicts with the goal of attaining credentials.

BROKERAGE GOAL

Learner will achieve social support for self-directed learning in terms of roles and facilities.

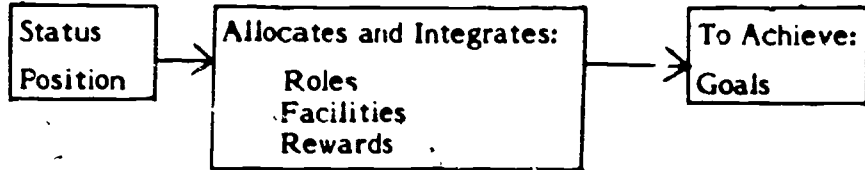
(Basic Contract)

Learner will achieve social rewards for self-directed learning as evidenced by credentials.

PRINCIPLES OF ACHIEVING SOCIAL SUPPORT

FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

SITUATION



Allocation

To achieve goals, roles, facilities and rewards are assigned.

Integration

To achieve goals, roles, facilities and rewards must be related to one another.

Status Position

The occupant of a status position is responsible for allocating and integrating certain roles, facilities and rewards in order to achieve the goals toward which the status position is oriented.

PRINCIPLES OF ACHIEVING SOCIAL SUPPORT
FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

FUNCTIONAL
INTERDEPENDENCE

Basis

Related Goals

Status positions which are structurally separate may be oriented to the same goal.

A status position may be oriented toward a goal which is a facility for the achievement of the goals of other structurally separate status positions

Related Means

Total of roles, facilities and rewards available to each status position and oriented toward related goals, including all the possible combinations for their integration to achieve said goals, can be considered in relation to improving the attainment of the related goals.

Dynamics

Exchange

Occupants of status positions sharing related goals will be inclined to allocate roles, facilities and rewards to each other if these can be jointly integrated in a manner that improves the ability of each to achieve their related goals.

PRINCIPLES OF ACHIEVING SOCIAL SUPPORT
FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

FUNCTIONAL
INTERDEPENDENCE (cont'd.)

Dynamics

Role Innovation

Roles vary in degrees of concreteness and consistency. By specifying which behaviors make up the role the individual is creating and modifying, as well as merely bringing roles to light.

Goals:

The orientation of behavior comprising a role varies in abstraction and universality. The more abstract and universal the goal is, the greater the opportunity to specify behavioral objectives oriented toward that goal which also reach a related goal.

Means:

Even when goals are specific it is possible that a wide variety of behaviors will reach the same goal. Again, the selection of those behaviors can be oriented to a related goal.

PRINCIPLES OF ACHIEVING SOCIAL SUPPORT
FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

FUNCTIONAL
INTERDEPENDENCE (cont'd.)

Dynamics

Marketplace

Universality:

The more abstract and universal a goal is, the greater the number and variety of related goals.

The greater the number and variety of behaviors specific to a goal, the greater the opportunities to achieve it in relation to achieving other goals.

Value:

The greater the number and variety of roles a goal can function to legitimize, the greater its value in the marketplace.

The greater the number and variety of other goals to which the achievement of a goal is related as a facility, the greater its value in the marketplace.

The greater the rewards associated with the achievement of a goal, the greater its value in the marketplace.

FUNCTIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE

AS A GOAL

MARKETPLACE

Universality

Abstract and universal.

Can be specified in an infinite number and variety of explicit behaviors.

Value

Serves to authorize any role involving cooperation or a division of labor.

A resource for achieving any goal involving cooperation or a division of labor.

Associated with the social reward of self-esteem and esteem of others.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Basic Contract

MARKETPLACE

Opportunities for Functional Interdependence

Related Goals:

Identify status positions oriented toward larger goals related to learner's self-directed learning goals.

Related Means:

Identify roles, facilities and rewards available to be allocated and integrated by the occupants of status positions identified.

Value:

Evaluate the relative advantages of functional interdependence with each status position.

STATUS POSITION

Basis of Functional Interdependence

Related Goals:

State the goal toward which the status position is oriented.

State how the self-directed learning goals are related to it.

Related Means:

Explain how the learner's previously acquired knowledge, skills and values can be applied to achieve the goals.

Describe roles the learner might perform in relation to the goals.

List evidence of prior qualifications the learner can present.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Basic Contract

STATUS POSITION (cont'd.)

Dynamics of Functional Interdependence

Exchange

Calculate the worth of the learner's previously acquired knowledge, skills and values in relation to the achievement of the goals.

Describe alternative combinations of roles, facilities, and rewards that might be achieved in exchange for the learner's agreement to apply the knowledge, skills and values to the goal.

Role Innovation

Goals:

Detail how the goals toward which the status position is oriented might be specified in terms of the learner's qualifications.

Explain how the goals toward which the status position is oriented might be specified in terms of the learner's self-directed learning goals.

Means:

Describe role behaviors the learner is qualified to perform as they might be applied to the goal that the status position is oriented to.

Explicate role behaviors related to the learner's self-directed learning goals as they might contribute to the goals toward which the status position is oriented.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Basic Contract

STATUS POSITION (cont'd.)

Dynamics of Functional Interdependence

Marketplace

Universality:

Evaluate separately and in relation to each other the degree to which rôles, facilities and rewards the learner might apply to the goal toward which the status position is oriented can also be applied to related goals.

Design the manner of specifying how rôles, facilities and rewards were utilised in relation to the goal toward which the status position is oriented as a credential transferable to related goals.

Value:

Quantify the value of allocating rôles, facilities and rewards on the basis of functional interdependence in comparison to the costs of providing monetary rewards.

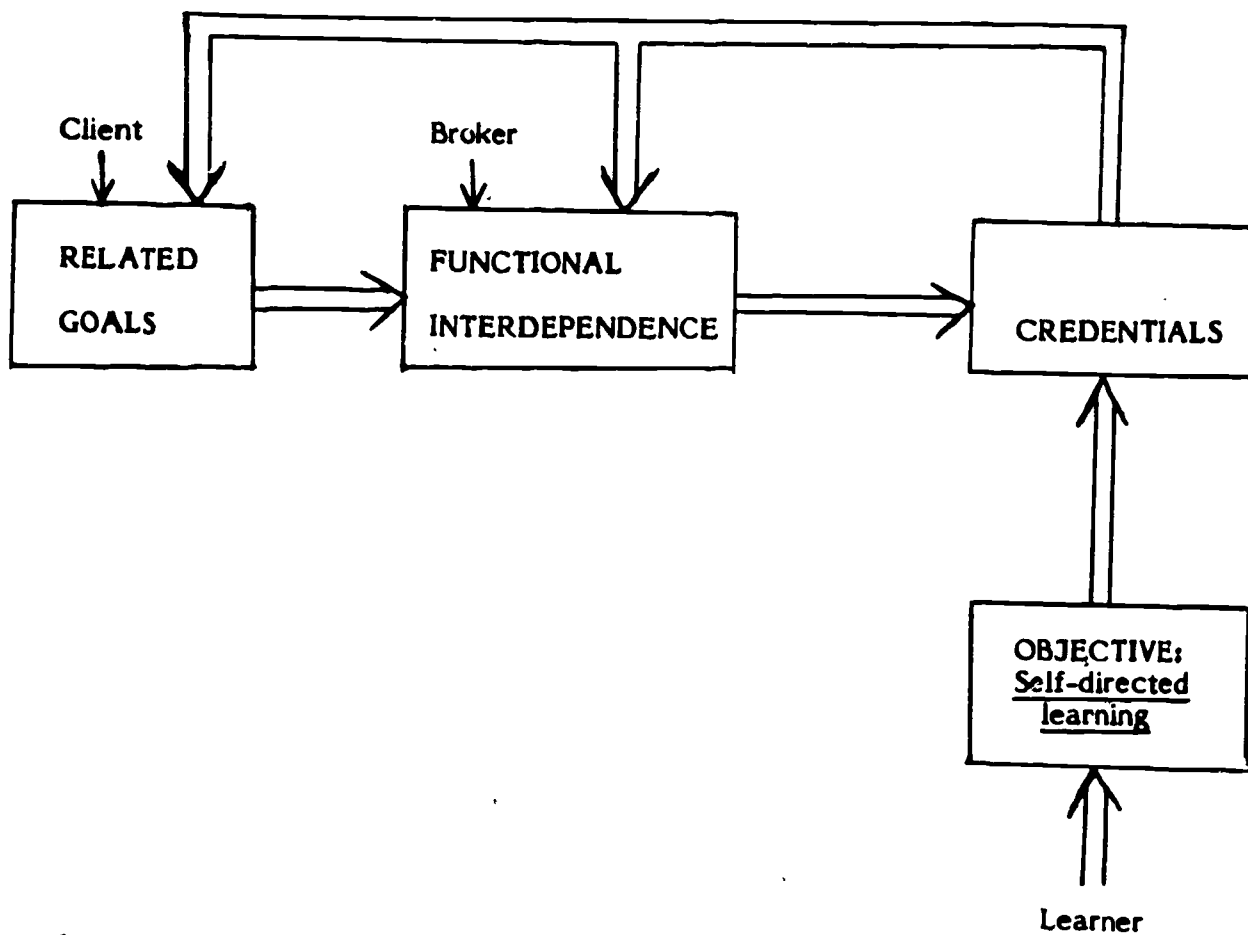
Rank descriptions of the manner in which rôles, facilities and rewards might be applied in term of levels of quality which can be observed.

Construct credentials to verify the value of further allocation and integration of rôles, facilities and rewards toward the achievement of self-directed learning objectives.

PARTIES TO BASIC CONTRCT

	<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Motives</u>
LEARNER	<p>Self-directed learner</p> <p>Oriented to some learning goal</p>	<p>Legitimatization of goal</p> <p>Legitimatization of behavior oriented toward goal</p> <p>Access to roles, facilities and rewards to apply to attainment of goal</p> <p>Credentials specifying and verifying achievements</p>
CLIENT	<p>Occupant of status position</p> <p>Oriented to goal identified as related to learner's self-directed learning goal</p>	<p>Effective and efficient allocation and integration of roles facilities and rewards to achieve goal</p>
BROKER	<p>Occupant of status position</p> <p>Oriented to facilitating learner's achievement of functional interdependence with client.</p>	<p>Legitimati zing self-directed learning</p> <p>Maintaining professional standards and code of ethics</p> <p>Communicating principles of achieving social support for self-directed learning.</p>

BASIC CONTRACT



**CONTRACT FORMAT TO
DESCRIBE FUNCTIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE**

Client Goal

Related To

Learner Goal

Services Rendered by Client

In Exchange For

Services Rendered by Learner

Roles

Provides work roles

Proof of qualifications and agreement to perform

Legitimizes and authorizes innovated roles

Specification of innovated role in relation to client's goal and agreement to perform

Facilities

**Human - Client him/herself
Client's subordinates**

Specification of how facility will be employed in relation to client's goal and agreement to terms specified

Material

Rewards

Provides rewards

Satisfactory performance of work roles as specified in contract

Provides credentials.

Satisfactory performance of innovated roles as specified in contract

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